DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 190 EA 017 732

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TITLE Incentive Pay Programs: The South Carolina Story.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Incentives; *Merit Pay; Program Development; *Recognition (Achievement); School Effectiveness; Schools; State Action; *State Legislation; State Programs; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS South Carolina; South Carolina Education Improvement Act 1984

ABSTRACT

South Carolina's comprehensive Education Improvement Act of 1984 includes provisions for the development and implementation of statewide incentive pay programs for teachers, principals, and schools. The provision affecting teachers mandates the development and field testing of up to three programs between 1984 and 1986 and the implementation of the final, selected program during the 1986-87 school year. Teachers will participate in developing the incentive program, which will be evaluated by a team of principals and teachers. The incentive pay program for principals will be produced through a similar development process, but on a timetable calling for final implementation during the 1987-88 school year. The incentive program for schools will make incentive grants available through the state department of education to reward schools and districts for exceptional performance in improving student achievement, attendance, and attitudes; teacher attendance; parent participation; and other factors promoting or maintaining high levels of achievement. The funds are to be used for further improvement efforts. The incentive pay programs are expected to increase accountability in the areas of certification, evaluation, instruction, promotion, and expenditure. The support of South Carolina's governor, Richard Riley, is cited as a major factor in obtaining funding from the legislature. (PGD)

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INCENTIVE PAY PROGRAMS: THE SOUTH CAROLINA STORY

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INCENTIVE PAY PROGRAMS: THE SOUTH CAROLINA STORY

M. Donald Thomas and Charles Welch[1]

Educational reform is not new to South Carolina. Beginning in 1979, the state has enacted major pieces of legislation to improve its public schools.

In 1984, Governor Richard Riley rallied the state behind The South Carolina Education Improvement Act. With the help of two blue-ribbon committees, the Governor convinced legislators that extensive reform was needed.

The people of South Carolina give credit to Governor Riley and to Mrs. Ann Riley for being the main forces behind the passage of the law. It was their efforts that convinced the public and the members of the General Assembly to support a tax increase. Without additional funds reform was not possible.

Riley put together a coalition of school people, business leaders, and citizens to support the legislation. He and Mrs. Riley traveled throughout the state to speak in support of school reform and the need for additional funds. On June 22, 1984, the school reform bill was passed by both houses of the General Assembly.

A major portion of the law deals with incentive pay programs. Many such programs have already been established in a few states: Illinois, California, and Tennessee.

Nowhere, however, has the desire for incentive pay programs been stronger than in South Carolina. The South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984 has been called "The single most comprehensive education reform law ever passed by a state legislature." The Act creates a new Division of Public Accountability. The Division is "responsible for the planning and development for the implementation of the Act." The legislation contains provisions for the development of:

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1. Evaluation programs for principals
2. Incentive pay programs for principals
3. Incentive pay programs for teachers
4. Incentive pay programs for schools
5. Competitive grants programs for schools
6. Competitive grants programs for teachers

Fortunately the law provides a sufficient period of time to develop the incentive pay programs for personnel - three years for teachers and four years for principals.

The South Carolina incentive pay program began in 1979. At that time, the state enacted into law The Teacher Training, Certification, and Evaluation Act. The provisions of this Act became fully effective for the 1983-1984 school year. The Act established rigorous standards for entering the teaching profession and for strong evaluation during the early years of teaching.

Based on this foundation, the legislature passed The Education Improvement Act of 1984 with its many provisions for incentive pay. Following is how the various incentive pay programs are to be established. In South Carolina, the law requires extensive participation of those affected in the development period and consultation with the Governor's office in the selection of final plans.

Incentive Pay - Teachers

Section 59-21-800 of the Education Improvement Act reads as follows:

"The State Board of Education acting with the assistance of the select committee shall cause to be developed and implemented a teacher incentive program to reward teachers who demonstrate superior performance and productivity."

The Law also does the following:

- Establishes a Teacher Incentive Program Advisory Committee to assist in the development of the program.
- Provides that "no more than three programs" be developed during the 1984-1985 school year.

- States that "no more than three programs" be field tested in nine districts during the school year 1985-1986. The nine pilot districts are to be "designated by the State Board of Education upon recommendation of the Select Committee."
- Provides that one program be implemented statewide beginning with the school year 1986-1987. The program to be implemented is to be selected by the State Board of Education "in consultation with the Office of the Governor."
- Provides funds for developing, field testing, and implementing the incentive pay program. For the 1986-1987 school year $21.5 million is provided for implementation.

These are the criteria in the law for developing the teacher incentive program:

1. Evaluation of teaching performance as it relates to improved student learning and development.
2. Evaluation by a team which includes principals and peers.
3. Evidence of self-improvement through advanced training.
4. Meaningful participation of teachers in the development of the plan.
5. Working with student teachers whenever possible.

The development of the final plan requires the involvement of the State Board of Education, the Advisory Committee, the Select Committee, and the Joint Sub-Committee (a group of business and community leaders). Plans which have been currently established require the participation of local school districts, leading citizens of the state, and every certified person now teaching in South Carolina. Everyone is encouraged to submit ideas and participate in the development of a teacher incentive pay program for which funds "shall be provided by the General Assembly in the annual General Appropriations Act."

Incentive Pay - Principals

Section 59-24-100 of the Education Improvement Act reads as follows:

"The State Board of Education acting with the assistance of the select committee shall cause to be developed and implemented a school principal incentive program to reward school principals who demonstrate superior performance and productivity."

The principal incentive program must be developed according to the following guidelines:

1. Incentive criteria is to be identified during the 1984-1985 school year.
2. No more than three model programs are to be developed during the school year 1985-1986.
3. Pilot programs are to be established in nine districts in the school year 1986-1987.
4. Implementation of a statewide program is to occur in the school year 1987-1988.

Some of the criteria for the program are established in law. They are:

1. Evaluation for instructional leadership performance as it is related to improved student learning and development.
2. Evaluation by a team which includes school administrators, teachers, and peers.
3. Evidence of self-improvement through advanced training.
4. Meaningful participation of school principals in the development of the plan.
5. Working with student teachers whenever possible.

The program is now being developed with the assistance of an advisory committee in cooperation with representatives of the private sector. Funds for the program "must be provided by the General Assembly in the annual General Appropriations Act." For the implementation year $14.0 million is requested.

Incentive Awards - Schools

One section of the Education Improvement Act deals with evaluating and rewarding schools and school districts based on measurable performance and progress. The law states that "beginning in school year 1985-1986 an incentive grant fund program must be established by the State Board of Education, acting through the State Department of Education, to reward schools and school districts for exceptional performance..."

Criteria for establishing the program include the following:

1. Achievement gains over the prior year.
2. Improved student attendance.
3. Improved teacher attendance.
4. Improved student attitudes toward learning.
5. Improved parent participation.
6. Other factors promoting or maintaining high levels of achievement.

The State Board of Education is directed to promulgate regulations to "ensure that the districts of the state utilize these funds to make further achievement gains and improve excellence in the schools."

In addition, this section of the law also provides competitive grants for schools to implement "exemplary and innovative programs." Such progams shall be designed "to improve instruction." The programs "may include more effective utilization of substitute teachers at the individual school level."

The Resurgence of Accountability

The incentive pay programs are part of a general reform movement for increased accountability. It is believed that differential pay programs will establish accountability in many areas:

- Certification
- Evaluation
- Instruction
- Promotion
- Expenditures

In addition to incentive pay programs accountability is being established by an "intervention program" into local school districts when the "quality of education is seriously impaired." This has been done in South Carolina, in New Jersey, in Arkansas, and is being considered in several other states.

Accountability is also being promoted by encouraging parents and private sector personnel to become involved in school affairs. Thus, parents are becoming more active, adopt-a-school programs are flourishing, and private/public sector cooperation is increasing. In South Carolina, active participation in school matters is a high priority for chambers of commerce, utilities, governmental bodies, retail merchants, churches, and many corporations. The Education Improvement Act has also stimulated increased numbers of volunteers and more extended participation by parents.

Conclusions

Incentive pay programs for educational personnel are being established throughout the United States. In many cases they are being established despite the objections of teacher organizations. In a few places, teacher groups are supporting this development.

Incentive pay programs are also being established for principals. What is good for teachers, it is believed, is also good for administrators. A few states have also established awards for effective and productive schools. Such awards programs have been enacted into law in Utah and in South Carolina.

The history of incentive pay programs is not a good one. This time around the forces are more powerful and more determined. Incentive pay programs may

become more popular because of the additional money allocated for them. In South Carolina, incentive pay programs are supported by an increase in the sales tax. At the same time, the state has committed itself to keep the base pay for all teachers at the average of the Southeastern states.

We have tried to improve education in a variety of ways. Some have failed and a few have succeeded. The future will determine the contributions made to quality education by incentive pay programs. We believe that South Carolina will adopt systems that will be beneficial to both students and employees.

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